

# Opinions

Everybody has one...

## Gatlinburg Fire - Part 2

The guest speaker of this year's Annual Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs Spring Executive Training Session was Gatlinburg Fire Chief Gregg Miller. In last week's column, I provided some of the many details that Chief Miller discussed about the wildland fires that devastated Gatlinburg, Tennessee in the fall of 2016. This week, we pick up some other details and some lessons learned.

The Gatlinburg fire caused a great deal of destruction and resulted in the loss of 14 lives. According to Chief Miller, this fire is the sixth costliest wildland fire in U.S. history. The fire started on November 23rd at the Chimney Tops in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park but didn't affect Gatlinburg until November 28th. That afternoon, high winds were pushing the fire towards the city eventually resulting in 2,530 structure fires reported.

Chief Miller went on to explain that the 911 system was overwhelmed with calls. People were calling to report emergencies, fires and to ask for information. The 911 center was so busy that the calls were being rolled over to their fourth backup 911 center. There were so many emergencies, that the Emergency Operations Center was having a difficult time recording them much less being able to send responders.

To compound the situation, the telephone, cell phone, internet, and radio communications went down due to the fire and falling trees. The wind had downed so many trees, that many of the roads became impassable. The secondary roads of Gatlinburg are small roads that snake their way up through the mountains very similar to our own. Gatlinburg fire crews along with other mutual aid firefighters from around the area were unable to get to certain places due to the downed trees and the danger of being trapped by the wild fire.

Chief Miller explained the stress and the difficulty that he and his crews faced while responding to this fire. He also stated that the fires were bad but the hardest duty was the search and rescue after the fire. There were numerous missing persons who had to be located, relocated and/or accounted for. That operation alone pushed many responders beyond their limits.

Gatlinburg fire was a unique and costly fire. The lessons

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**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**  
*David Dyer*



## Pilgrim's Progress

"There is nothing new under the sun," Ecclesiastes says. That's because we humans have always been on the same journey. John Bunyan wrote his classic, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, about 350 years ago, yet what he describes is as modern as high speed internet.

Bunyan became a Christian as an adult and began to preach. But preaching outside the Church of England was illegal (religious freedom is a fragile thing). He spent 12 years in jail because he refused to conform. While incarcerated he wrote the famous manuscript, a book now translated into over 200 languages.

Pilgrim leaves the City of Destruction carrying a heavy burden. Evangelist urged him to follow the light to the narrow wicket gate. Worldly Wiseman re-directed him to the village of Morality to seek a man named Legality. This diversion worsened his misery. Evangelist found him again and explained that Wiseman "favors only the doctrine of this world (therefore he always goes to the town of Morality to church) and partly because he loves that doctrine best, for it saves him from the cross. This Legality is not able to set you free from your burden."

Pilgrim finally passed through the gate and found the way. "He ran thus til he came at a place somewhat ascending, and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below in the bottom, a sepulcher. His burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble til it came to the mouth of the sepulcher where it fell in." The pilgrim, called Christian, gave three leaps of joy, saying, "Blest cross! Blest sepulcher! Blest rather be, the Man that there was put to shame for me."

Legalism and moralism are no substitute for God's saving grace. If living by a code or turning over a new leaf could suffice, no cross and no Savior are needed. Relying on one's own truth or effort to achieve spirituality is as modern as it is ancient. The Bible says, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified" (Gal 2:16).

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**All Things New**  
*Wayne Fowler*



## Commissioner's Questions

**Q. We love to play golf at Butternut Creek Golf Course and it is one of the main reasons we moved to Union County. When do you think the construction of the new irrigation system will be completed. We were told that the course should be open in May, but we are concerned since it seems with the weather, little work has gotten done over the winter.**

A. The contract with the company requires that the course irrigation system be installed and ready for play on or before April 30, 2018. The bad weather days have to be calculated and that increases the deadline. However, once the final deadline number is established, the company will have to pay \$500 per day penalty that the work is not completed. We hope the penalty will encourage them to complete the work as soon as possible. The Golf Course will keep everyone interested updated as work progresses. You will need to call the course for the latest info. However, we have expressed serious concerns to the contractor and hope they will increase their number of employees on the job very soon.

**Q. Why did the golf course need a new irrigation system? Don't we get enough rain?**

A. The current irrigation system was first installed between 1990 and 1993. It is completely worn out and we were spending more money on repairs and in many cases, could not find the leaks for several days or even weeks as the water does not always bubble up to the surface. This causes pumps to run unnecessarily wasting water and energy.

While we usually are blessed with a significant amount of rainfall, the past few years have seen it become steadily dryer, until last year. Fertilizers and chemicals used on a golf course once spread, need immediate water to prevent damage to the grass. Also, during drought situations it is critical to keep the course watered or we may incur very expensive turf repairs, especially on the greens.

**Q. Isn't Butternut Creek Golf Course or any golf course a waste of time and money?**

A. The answer is an emphatic NO. Butternut Creek Golf Course has an excellent reputation as being a great example of the

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**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**  
*Lamar Paris*



## Drug Free Mountain Life

### Drugs and Sexual Assault: What You Should Know

#### April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Whether at a bar, at a party, or even at a "friend's" home – drug-facilitated sexual assault can happen to anyone at any time. For this reason, it's important that the young people in your life understand the danger and are aware of the facts to protect themselves from becoming victims.

Although there are many substances that can cause you to pass out or lose control, certain drugs are referred to as "sexual assault" (or "date-rape") drugs because sexual predators often use them to get control over their victims. These drugs include gamma hydroxybutyric acid (GHB), Rohypnol, ketamine, and Ecstasy. Drinking a beverage spiked with one or more of these drugs can take away a person's memory and their ability to fight back.

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**The DRUG FREE MOUNTAIN LIFE campaign supports an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of illegal substance abuse.**

## Letters to the Editor

### Mis-conception of Perception

Dear Editor,  
Oh ye of insecure and little faith, hearken unto these words; judge not ever another for their own conviction and security to their faith, lest ye be judged a hypocrite. The path to righteousness lies within all creatures of Creation, regardless of faith. Accept this as ye would accept the differences of thy neighbor, family or friend and hate them not. For however ye treat them shall determine thy due diligence. To reach the Heavens and enlightenment, thou must open thy minds to Creations' infinite possibilities: reject greed, suffer humility, learn patience, tolerate ignorance, humble thyself, conquer fear, and feel compassion. Find thy inner selves and strengthen thy resolve, have understanding to show pity and mercy upon the unfortunate, show them compassion and share knowledge and wisdom, know that all have a place in this Universe to have free will and choice. For in achieving this sense of completeness, only then can thou reach enlightenment and find inner peace within thyselfes.

Druid King, The Preacher

### Common Sense

Dear Editor,  
"If a cricketer suddenly decided to go into a school and batter a lot of people to death with a cricket bat, which he could do very easily, I mean, are you going to ban cricket bats?" Prince Philip, of the UK, reacting to proposals to ban firearms.

Jim Steed

### While Tennessee and Alabama pass competitive balance rules, GHSA fiddles

Dear Editor,  
The 2016 Georgia High School Association (GHSA) reclassification was supposed to be about improving competitive balance. Wrong! It was about moving Class 2A private schools out of 2A. Since reclassification, the eight Atlanta-area private schools in classifications 3A and 4A, representing 7% of all schools, won 40% of all state titles (23 of 58 competitions). Region 7-4A Marist and Blessed Trinity won 11 of these.

Beginning in 2018, Region 7-4A will consist of Blessed Trinity, Chestatee, Denmark, Flowery Branch, Marist, West Hall, and White County. Denmark is a new school. Since 2000, Marist and Blessed Trinity have a combined 128 state championships. 80 of these are in 4A. 77 of these were won by Marist. Since 2000, Chestatee, Flowery Branch, West Hall, and White County have a combined six state championships, of which one was in 4A.

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## Letters to the Editor

### Day of Prayer, May 3, 2018

Dear Editor,  
What an exciting day this should be for all of Blairsville and for all of mankind. All the retired and active ministers are rejoicing because they are about to receive the greatest blessing there is. The folds are coming together as ONE in Christ.

Here is my prayer for the Day of Prayer: DEATH to the APATHY that we have adopted and adapted, ATTITUDES of it's no one's business of what I do, DISRESPECT for self, man and country, GODLESS action among each other. Have we become more important than God? Can we not give Him one day of praise for all He does for us? Has our unbelief become our belief? If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, then support what God is asking you to do in action. Come together as One to pray for the world, not just our country. He created the Earth and all that is on, in, and under it. If you are not physically able to join in the Day of Prayer at any of the places that are assembling, then please make it a point to put your FAITH IN ACTION and PRAY wherever you are. Matthew 10:33-35. We welcome you to join us at First Baptist Church at 6 PM.

In His Grace,  
Jackie B. Wells

### ESPLOST and SPLOST

Dear Editor,  
I read one of the most intelligent letters to the Editor by Jim Brece in response to Ed Reed's words of wisdom "It's only a Penny". The ESPLOST has been voted in for the past 20 years and 20 years ago it was a new tax. Let's look at this "It's only a Penny" in a different point of view. Take all your sales tickets, receipts, invoices, etc... for the past 20 years of everything you have bought in Union County and add the totals up after taxes. Make sure you include the big ticket items such as new cars, used cars, furniture, appliances, etc... then subtract out 1%. I guarantee you it's more than "It's only a Penny". Just think what you could or would have done if you were able to spend your own hard earned money instead of Bureaucrats or Government Officials doing it for you.

I agree with Jim Brece on giving ESPLOST and even SPLOST a rest for 5 years. Just think if Union County only had a 5% sales tax what that would mean for every business in town, large and small. People would come from other counties and maybe even States to buy large ticket items here in Union County. Union County would look very appealing for business growth. Personally, we would be giving ourselves a well earned raise in our income, especially

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## Around The Farm

### The Shoe is Now on the Other Foot

As a parent is there anything you worry more about than your kids? This has really come home to me over the past few years. When I was a boy I loved to go barefoot even in the winter time and I never wore shoes in the house. As a result I was constantly coming down with a cold. Therefore, my dad forbade me from going barefoot during winter, even in the house. Late one night I woke up to a feeling of urgency. I jumped from the bed and looked for my shoes. The only ones I found were my brand new and heavy Sunday dress shoes. I put them on and walked down the hardwood door to the only bathroom in the house. My parents' bedroom was just down the hall and the sound of my walking awoke my mother and she woke up my dad and told him we had an intruder in the house. Dad couldn't find his shotgun so he grabbed his 3 iron and walked down the hall. He noticed the bathroom light on and kicked in the door and there I sat. I explained to Dad, "You told me not to go barefoot in the house and these were the only shoes I could find".

When my oldest son was born I would get up 3-4 times a night to check on him. On one such night I went to check on him as I was going to bed. I had turned off the lights and the house was very dark. I went to Will's bed and bent over his little body. I still could not see anything so, I bent over further. I guess I got too close to his face and much to my surprise I was punched directly in my left eye by his 2 year old fist. My wife and I went shopping when Will was 3 years old. I explained to him that he should stay close and should not talk to strangers. I remember looking away for just an instant and he was gone. I could not see him anywhere. I was really beginning to worry and called his name. I could faintly hear his voice answering me. I walked closer to the sound and realized he had locked himself in the dressing room. Later I asked him why he had gone into the dressing room and he said he just wanted to see what was on the other side of the door.

My youngest son, Wade, came along and I noticed that he was the inquisitive one. He as always asking questions. One morning I was awakened at 3 AM by someone shaking my face. I thought something was wrong and jumped from the bed trying to figure out what do. I came to myself by looking into Wade's eyes. He grinned at me and asked, "Dad, why are green beans green?" I took a deep breath and thought to myself, "I'm a County Agent. I can answer this ques-

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**Around The Farm**  
*Mickey Cummings*



## RC&D

### Honeybees - Only Insect Producing Food for Man

Recently ChestChat RC&D Sponsored an all-day Honeybee workshop at the Union County Farmers Market where bee experts demonstrated all things about bee keeping. It's that time of year to start planting gardens and High Tunnels because spring is just around the corner. Honeybees are an essential part of growing fruits and vegetables and without them to pollinate the blooms the plants just won't produce. Bees will do the pollinating job plus give us honey later in the summer. Bees are an essential part of our food chain so when you see bees on your picnic plate be assured they are not trying to find a tender place to sting, just foraging for pollen to take back to the hive to feed the queen mother and 59,999 other hard-working worker sisters and a few dead-beat drone brothers.

Domestication of bees is shown in Egyptian art from around 4,500 years ago, simple hives and smoke were used and honey was stored in jars, some of which were found in the tombs of pharaohs such as Tutankhamun. It wasn't until the 18th century that European understanding of the colonies and biology of bees allowed the construction of the moveable comb hive so that honey could be harvested without destroying the entire colony.

A colony of bees consists of three castes of bee: A Queen Bee, which is normally the only breeding female in the colony. The queen is the only sexually mature female in the hive and all of the female worker bees and male drones are her offspring. The queen may live for up to three years or more and can lay half a million eggs or more in her lifetime. At the peak of the breeding season, late spring to summer, a good queen may be capable of laying 3,000 eggs in one day. The queen is raised from a normal worker egg, but is fed a larger amount of royal jelly than a normal worker bee, resulting in a radically different growth and metamorphosis. The Queen produces pheromones and one of these chemicals suppresses the development of ovaries in all the female worker bees in the hive and prevents them from laying eggs. The queen emerges from her cell after 15 days of development and she remains in the hive for 3-7 days before venturing out on a mating flight. Mating flight is otherwise known as "nuptial flight". Her first orientation flight may only last a few seconds, just enough to mark the position of the hive. Subsequent mating flights may last from 5 minutes to 30 min-

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**RC&D Executive Director**  
*Frank Riley*



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